

Happy October everyone! as we enter this new month, this month of harvesting, we think not only of crops, but of souls. Please remember our revival which is Thursday Oct. 3 and Friday Oct 4th at 7pm and sat. Oct. 5 at 10:30 in the morning. Communion and a meal will follow worship. All are welcome. Hope to see you there!

God bless you and yours!

Pastor Don

“The Prodigal Son”     Luke 15:11-32     September 29, 2013

While teaching her 5th grade class the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15, the Sunday school teacher asked who was the unhappiest when the prodigal son returned home. Little Johnny raised his hand and said “I know teacher, it was the fatted calf!”

Luke is the only gospel writer who gives us the story of the prodigal son. It is a very famous story, but it is more than just a story; there are families who have experienced it for themselves. On Feb. 26, 1995 the Jersey Village Baptist Church in Houston, Texas began their Wed evening service at 6:30pm just like normal. A young lady came forward at the altar call, confessed her sins and found Jesus. Soon others were coming forward and receiving Christ. Around 9pm a couple went forward and asked prayers for their son. He had ran away 4 months earlier seeking freedom to live his life his way. While the church prayed, that son was in Galveston at the Mardi-Gras. He felt God tugging on his heart and he got in his car and drove the 1 ½ hours back to Houston. He found his parents house empty, so knowing it was church night, even though it was 11pm, he went to church. When he walked in the door, a deacon saw him and directed him up front to the altar where his parents and others were praying for him. He committed his life to Christ right then and there.

But some haven't yet experienced that great reconciliation. On Aug. 28, 1982 a 28 year old private willingly defected from his South Korea post over to North Korea. His parents lived in St. Louis and they held a news conference a short while after the incident was made public. His father stated in the news conference that his son has lost all credibility with his country and even with him, but he is still his son and he loves him and wants him back. God is like this father; he knows we have turned a way from Him, but if we will return, he will forgive us and welcome us home. Are we ready to come home? God has left the light on for us and he is sitting on the porch watching for our return.

Are we watching for prodigal children to return? Are we seeking them? Are we praying for them? Are we one of them?

Would you pray with me as we begin this morning's message? (Pray)

In this 3<sup>rd</sup> parable about finding lost things, Jesus tells us about finding the most valuable and most important of all things, a human soul. Sheep and coins have value, but nothing is as valuable to God as a human soul. This is one of Christ's most memorable parables. It has several elements and lessons. The father represents God. Unlike the shepherd and the woman, he does not go looking for what is lost, his son, but he waits patiently & watches carefully for him to return. The older brother represents the Pharisees; filled with self-righteousness, pride, prejudice and indifference. Like the Pharisees, he could care less that his brother had repented and was now safely home. How do we feel when someone repents; happy like God and His angels or indifferent like the brother and the Pharisees?

The 1<sup>st</sup> thing Jesus tells us in this story is that it was the younger son's idea to have dad give them their inheritance now. Legally, he was not entitled to any inheritance until his father died. Asking for his inheritance now was a very rude thing for him to do but he did it. And his father granted his request! He gave his younger son, his inheritance, 1/3 of his estate. According to Jewish law, the eldest son gets a double portion of his father's estate. So the younger son took his inheritance went off to the far country; he went off to the big city, & there he wasted his money with prodigal living. Prodigal living means he spent his money foolishly; that he was reckless & extravagantly wasteful. People tend to be wasteful when they have a lot. Things run out fast enough, but they really run out fast when we are wasteful. Soon, all his money was gone and he was homeless, penniless and friendless. Nobody gave him anything.

This young man learned a lesson about people; everybody loves a winner, they all love you when you're on top. But when you find yourself down and out, they don't care about you. He thought he had lots of friends, but he soon learned he had no friends; they were all friends of his money and when it was gone, so were they.

What was he going to do now? He was hungry, broke, friendless and many, many miles from home. He went looking for work, but jobs were scarce and times were hard. Finally he found a job. Not a good job, but a job. As a matter of fact it was the worse job any Jewish boy could have. He got a job feeding pigs. Pigs are unclean animals according to the Mosaic Law. He had hit rock bottom. Sin causes shame, distress and contempt in our lives. This young man was

facing the consequences of his sins. He was so hungry and depressed that the pig slop looked good to him. We are not told how long he had this job, but we are told that he finally came to himself. He woke up! He repented. He went home.

He went back to his father, hoping to become a servant on his father's farm. But did he ever get a surprise. While he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. His father ran out to meet him. He hugged and kissed him. He commanded a ring for his finger, a robe for his body, and sandals for his feet. His father saw him coming because he was looking for him to come home. God is looking for sinners to come home today. Are we watching for them too? Do we seek out lost souls? Do we rejoice when they are found? When someone repents and comes to God, He receives them with open arms. He forgives them and loves them. Jesus told us in John 6:37 "The one who comes to me I will by no means cast out." The prodigal son repented to his father when he said I have sinned against heaven and before you. He asked his father to forgive him & to hire him as a servant. But the father had full restoration in mind. The father forgave him fully.

The father rejoiced and invited everyone to rejoice with him. He killed the fatted calf and made a feast for everyone. He threw a big party. He said my son was dead but now is a live again; he was lost but now is found. The father gave proof that his rejoicing and forgiveness was true. 1<sup>st</sup> he put a robe on his son. A robe is the symbol of princes and great men. It represented the best clothes the man had to give his son. It was usually worn by the guest of honor. Putting a ring on his son's finger was a mark of dignity and honor. It was a symbol of authority. This ring probably had the family crest on it, with this ring father was telling everyone that he had accepted his son back into the family as his son. And the sandals for his feet were also a symbol. Servants and slaves went barefooted, sons had shoes. When a servant was given his freedom, he was also given a pair of shoes.

Jesus is giving us a picture of God. God is watching for lost sinners to repent and come home. When we come to God in repentance, our sins are washed away in the blood of Christ; all our sins, each and every one of them. God remembers them no more. He promises us in Psalm 103:12 "As far as the East is from the West, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." God forgives, forgets and restores. After He forgives us, He clothes us in the righteous robe of Christ. Isaiah told us that our righteousness is as filthy rags, so when we come to Christ, God clothes us in His righteousness.

Then God gives us a spiritual ring for our finger. That ring is the seal of the Holy Spirit. Every Christian is filled with the Holy Spirit the minute they receive Christ. When we go to work for Christ, Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:15 to shod our feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. When we come to God in full repentance, we get peace with God. We are on His side; He strengthens and sustains us. The father peacefully accepted the son back with open arms. How do we treat those who repent and come back home?

Notice the words the father used to describe the sons return. He was dead but now is alive again; he was lost but now is found. The 2 contrasts totally summarize the transformation of the prodigal son. They truly are reasons to celebrate. They are the reasons Jesus chose to associate with the lost. Do they encourage us to do the same?

The father met the young mans needs. The young man, while in the far country was lost, separated from God. He was hungry, homeless and all alone. When he repented and went home, he was reunited with his family, fed and loved. God promises to meet our needs if we put Him 1<sup>st</sup> in our lives. Matthew 6:33 “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. “ Is God 1<sup>st</sup> in our lives?

Unlike the father, the older brother was not celebrating the return of his little brother. As a matter of fact, he was a little upset by it, and when he found out that dad was throwing a party for him, he got down right mad. He refused to join the party, so dad went out to talk to him. Notice that the older brother did not call the prodigal son my brother? He called him ‘this son of yours’. Big brother is not so sure that little brother is truly repentant.

Is this how we react when a prodigal child is saved? He wanted to see him punished, not forgiven. Do we want to see prodigal children saved? Do we like big brother and the Pharisees proclaim our self-righteousness? Do we get mad and think it is unfair when God forgives someone who has led a notoriously sinful life?

The brother is a direct contrast to the father. The father forgave because he was filled with love. The brother refused to forgive because he was filled with resentment. He complains to his father that he had worked many years for him and never transgressed his commandments, yet he was never even given a young goat for a party with his friends.

The father answered and reminded him that all that he had was his; he was given his inheritance too. He could have had a party at any time, he just never asked for one. Jesus told us in Matthew 7:7-8 “Ask and it will be given unto you, seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened unto you. For everyone who asks receives, he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks, it will be opened.” So what do we want? Are we asking for it? Are we seeking it? Have we knocked on Gods door for it? The brother is like a lot of Christians today; mad because someone they feel is beneath them is getting more blessing than they are. We all need to remember that no one is better than anyone else. We are all sinners saved by grace. We all come to God through the blood of Jesus Christ. He died for everyone. Jesus makes all people equal in God’s eyes. God loves each of us the same. The difference is in how much we love God. In Luke 7 Jesus teaches us that he who is forgiven the most loves the most. How much do we love God? Do we love Him

enough to rejoice with the angels when a prodigal child comes home? Do we love Him enough to go out and search for lost souls?

Chapter 15 contains 3 kinds of lost ness. The sheep got lost a little at a time. He didn't mean to get lost, it just happened, a little at a time. You see he started eating and just followed the grass; right through a hole in the fence. He didn't even notice he was out of bounds; he just kept following the grass. Soon he was full and stopped eating. He looked up and had no idea where he was or how he got there. He was lost; he had eaten his way into the far country. This happens to us when we ignore our conscience and do whatever we want. God gives us boundaries for a reason, we need to obey them. Do we?

The lost coin got lost through carelessness. It happens to us when we are careless with our lives. We choose the wrong friends, hang out with the wrong people, visit the wrong places, fill our minds with the wrong things and make wrong decisions. Before we know it, we end up in the far country.

The prodigal son represents the 3<sup>rd</sup> state of lost ness; pure rebellion. We choose to do the wrong thing, plain and simple, we know right and wrong and we choose to do wrong. We choose to do things our way no matter who tells us the right way to do things. We choose to sin. Soon we too end up in the far country. Have we reached the bottom?

Have we come to ourselves and repented? If we have, have we accepted God's forgiveness? Are we helping others to find it? Do we want them to find God?

The father reminded the elder son that "this son of yours" was also his brother. He told him it was right for them to make merry & be glad for your brother was dead & is alive again was lost but now is found. Do we want to see lost souls found? R we willing to search for them? Do we accept them & give them love and encouragement so that they can grow in Christ? No one is too bad to be saved and no one is too good to need saving.

Are you in the far country this morning my friend? Are u lost/ hungry/ friendless? God wants to be your friend. He loves you. He will feed you. He has a home for you; He has a plan for you. He will save you; all you have to do is ask and receive/ seek & find/ knock & have it open unto u. Prodigal child, won't you come home today? Amen. Let's pray.